

ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: SCENIC DESIGN OF PRINCESS & THE
PAUPER - A BOLLYWOOD TALE
IMAGINATION STAGE

4908 AUBURN AVE
BETHESDA, MD 20814
FEBRUARY 10 – MARCH 18, 2018

Emily Christine Lotz, Master of Fine Arts,
2018

Thesis Directed By: Professor, Daniel Conway, School of
Theatre, Dance, and Performance Studies

The purpose of this thesis is to provide research, supporting paperwork, production photographs, and other materials that document the scenic design process for *Princess & the Pauper - A Bollywood Tale* at Imagination Stage. This thesis contains the following: concept statement, scenic research images collected to express period, location, and the emotional landscape to the production team, preliminary design, photographs of the 1/4" scale model, a full set of drafting plates and supporting paint elevations to communicate the design, a prop list and accompanying research, archival production photographs to document the completed design, and finally periodical reviews of the show.

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IMAGINATION STAGE

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FEBRUARY 10 – MARCH 18, 2018

by

Emily Christine Lotz

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts
2018

Advisory Committee:

Professor Daniel Conway, Chair
Professor Brian MacDevitt
Associate Professor and Head of MFA in Design Mikhail Kachman

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Dedication

To my family, through their endless support and love have allowed me to accomplish what I have today.

To my fellow MFA designers, it is an honor to create and discover with you now and in the future.

To all my dearest friends, for getting me through. This would not have been possible without you.

A special thanks to Katie, Remi, Willie, and Tammy, you are my DC family who give me strength and comfort every day.

Acknowledgements

I wish to acknowledge the talented group of artists, craftspeople, and specialists whose collaboration and passion helped make this production possible.

Creative Team:

Janet Stanford, Director
Christopher Brusberg, Lighting Designer
Kristen P. Ahern, Costume Designer
Alexandra Kelly Colburn, Multimedia Designer
Matt Otto, Sound Designer
Matthew Aldwin McGee, Props Designer

Production Staff:

Jennifer Schwartz, Production Manager
John Elder, Technical Director
Jason Caballero, Assistant Technical Director
Danielle N. Harris, Scenic Charge Artist
Ellen Houseknecht, Stage Manager

In addition, I would like to acknowledge the hard work of the design faculty who got me to where I am. It is through their wisdom, support, and passion that I have grown not only as an artist, but as a person. Thank you.

Daniel Conway
Misha Kachman
Helen Q. Huang
Brian MacDevitt
Jared Mezzocchi
Aaron Posner
Matt Torney

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CONCEPT STATEMENT

Princess & the Pauper – A Bollywood Tale, is a musical, by Anu Yadav with music by Ashwin Subramanian, adapted from Mark Twain's story *Prince & The Pauper*, based upon the historical character of Razia Sultan, a Muslim head of state who ruled the Delhi Sultanate from 1236-1240 AD. She is remembered by Indian girls as being the lone female to rise to power in a male dominated society. *Princess & the Pauper – A Bollywood Tale* is about young women breaking free from the shackles of their caste by speaking up for social justice and equality.

The director, Janet Stanford, conveyed to the design team the importance of reflecting the heritage and culture to young audiences. Bollywood dance and music, an exemplification of the rich culture of India, past and present, created a platform to explore: epic scale, marginalization of women, melodramatic stakes, palace life versus peasant life, and expressionism through song and dance.

As the scenic designer, I aspired to convey the delicate decadence between the cold entrapping façade of the palace and the colorful communal spirit of a loving home. Using both ancient and modern architectural influences I established a vocabulary of monochromaticity, grandeur, and symmetry.

One of the main challenges I faced was unifying the disparate locations into a cohesive unit set. By creating a versatile “shell” that embodies

the symmetry between the stark princess lifestyle and the enriching pauper experience, I utilized a central circular turntable to seamlessly transition from the lavish palace to an enchanting jungle. This enhanced the fluid movement of the Bollywood drama.

CHAPTER 1: THE PRE-PRODUCTION PROCESS

1.1 Research Images

The initial research for the production needed to include location and emotional response as well as knowledge of Indian culture and architecture. I was immediately struck by the contrast of the vibrant costumes of the foreground and the desaturate hues of the background in Warwick Goble's Illustrations (Figure 2). I continued my focus with the movement of Bollywood by watching films and choosing stills that best represented the emotional landscape of the play. These images (Figures 1 to 8) informed design decisions based on line, shape, color, texture, form, and mood, which work in tandem to create a scenic idea.



Figure 1



Figure 2

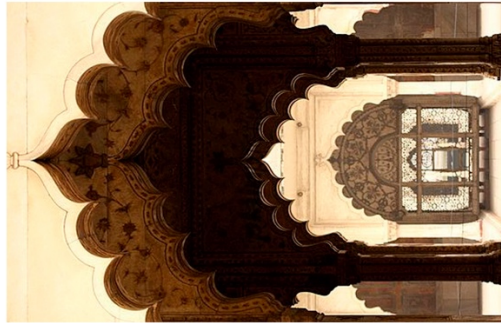
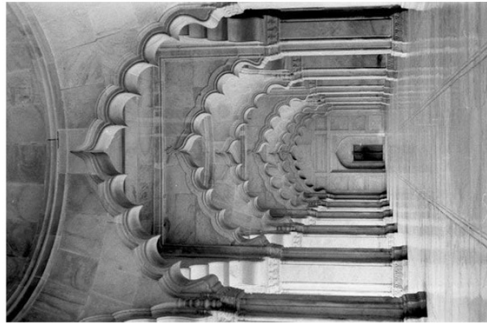


Figure 3

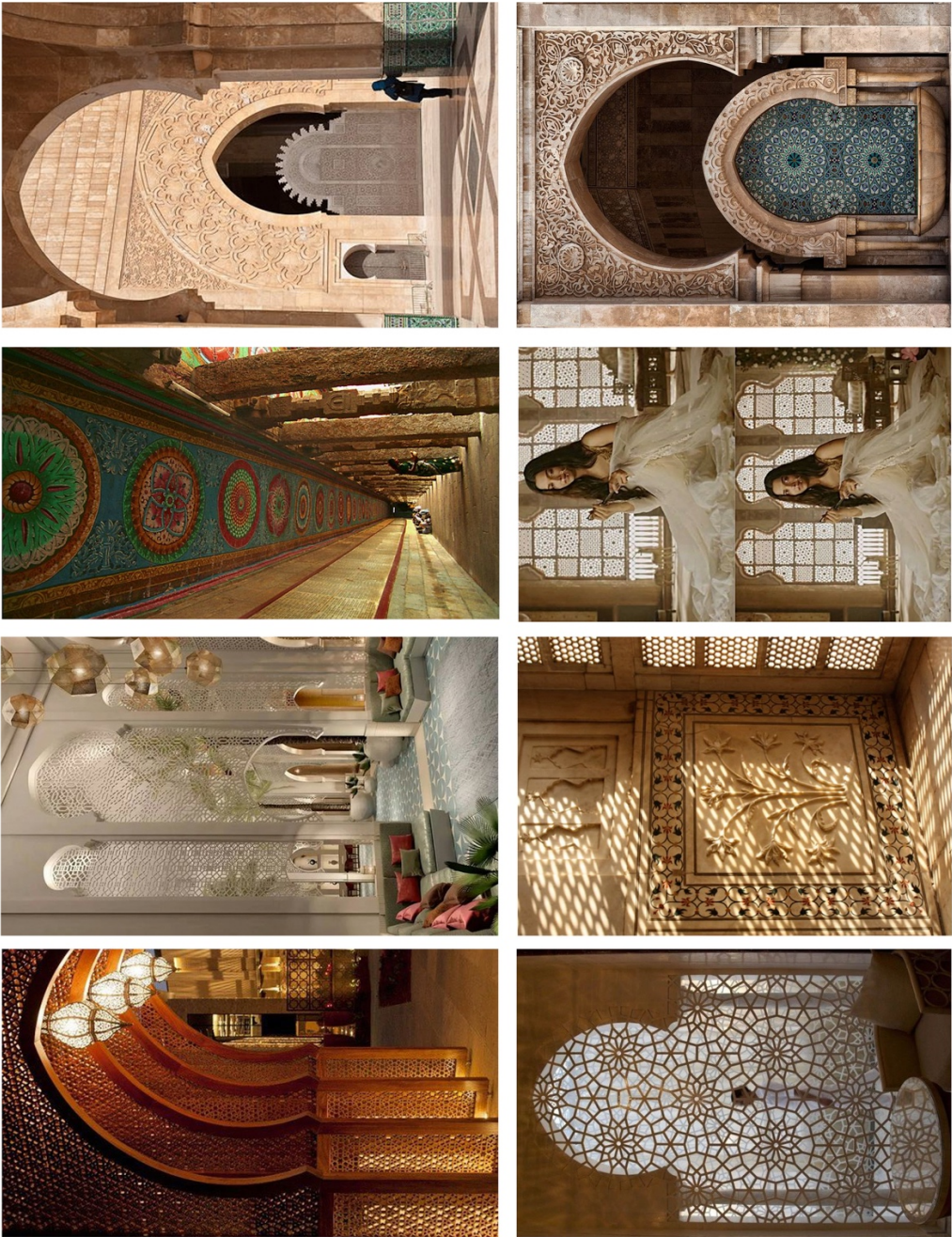
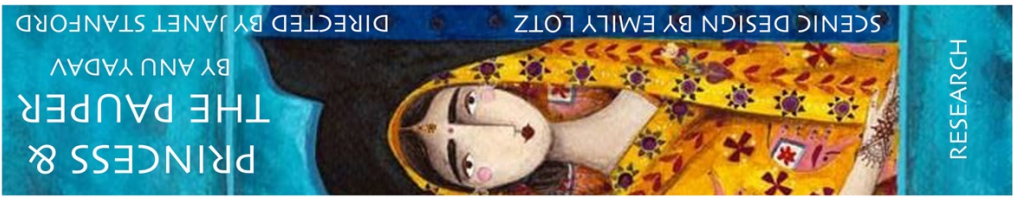


Figure 4

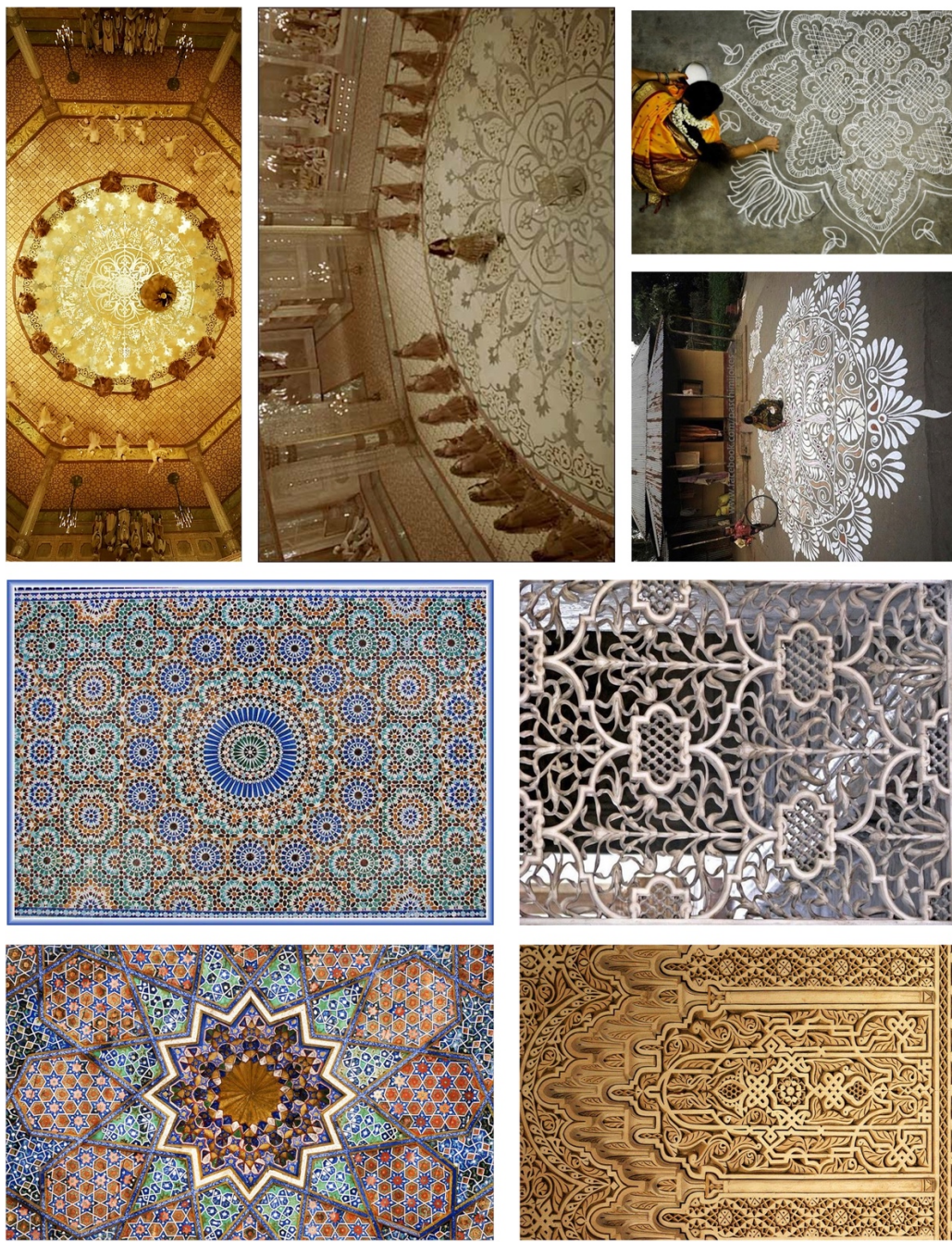
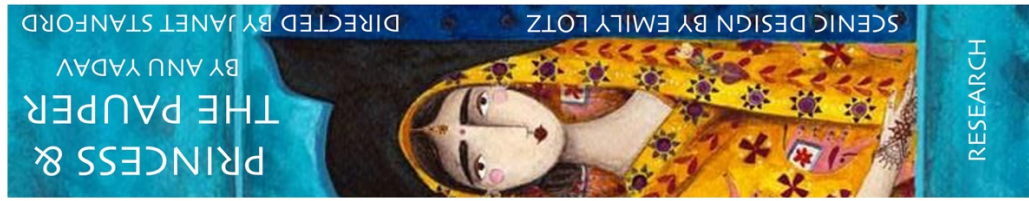


Figure 5

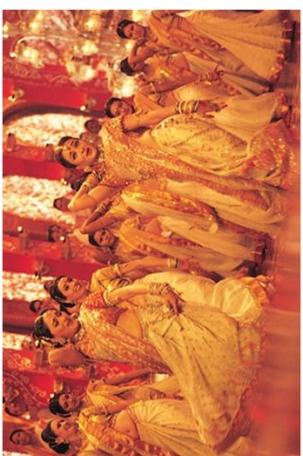
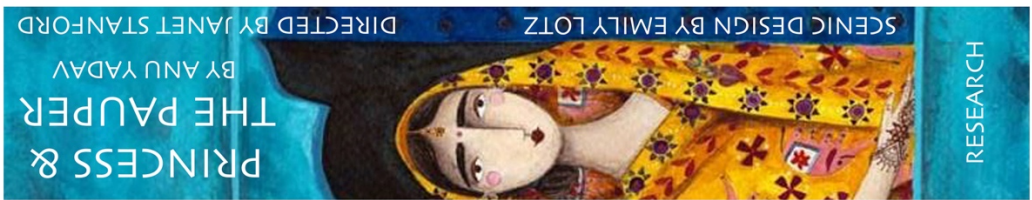


Figure 6

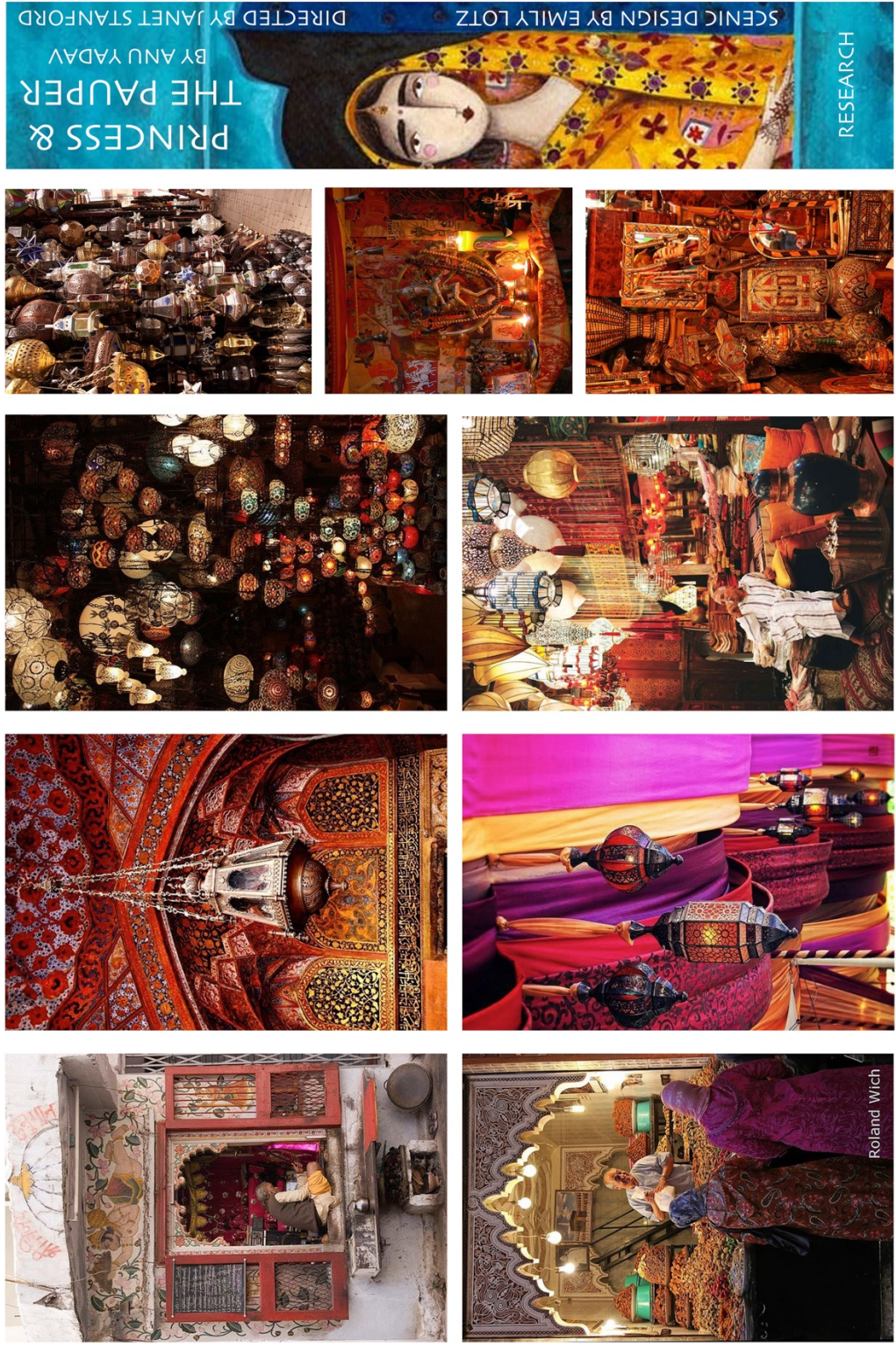


Figure 7

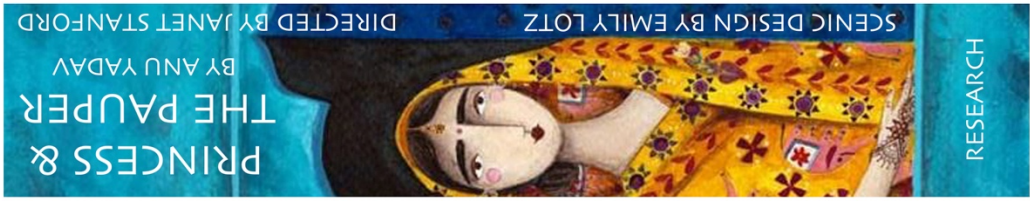


Figure 8

1.2 Developing the Design

After multiple meetings and discussing the research images extensively with the director, Janet Stanford, the next step was developing the design. The first step of the process was establishing the shape and scale of the “shell”; this was achieved through crafting an initial ¼” bash model (Figure 9 to 10). Through my research of Bollywood, I was drawn to the symmetry, repetition, and perspective of archways. This, along with directorial and adversarial input, solidified the feeling and specificity of the design. When presented to the director, the concern was the set was too far upstage. Thus, in my next bash model (Figures 11 -12), I explored bringing the “shell” downstage and into thrust space making the arches more imposing and epic in scale. The symmetrical arches allowed for a defined split between the stage right and stage left areas, each respectively becoming the locations for the princess’s palace and the pauper’s home. The depth of the space also became more expansive with the layered arches and screens admitting more light into the space. Large textured wall space and later smooth filled windows accommodated the use of multi-media.

Following the approval from Janet Stanford on this design, I continued by adding color and texture. During the process of budgeting the design elements, concessions were made, such as the cutting of the second and third arches in the cost-out meeting, and, due to technical constraints of the build process, the screen wall. After a discussion with my advisors, I added

columns and lanterns to help keep the depth of the palace “shell”. Those revisions are seen in the ¼” color model (Figures 13 to 14) of the finalized design.



Figure 9



Figure 10



Figure 11



Figure 12



Figure 13

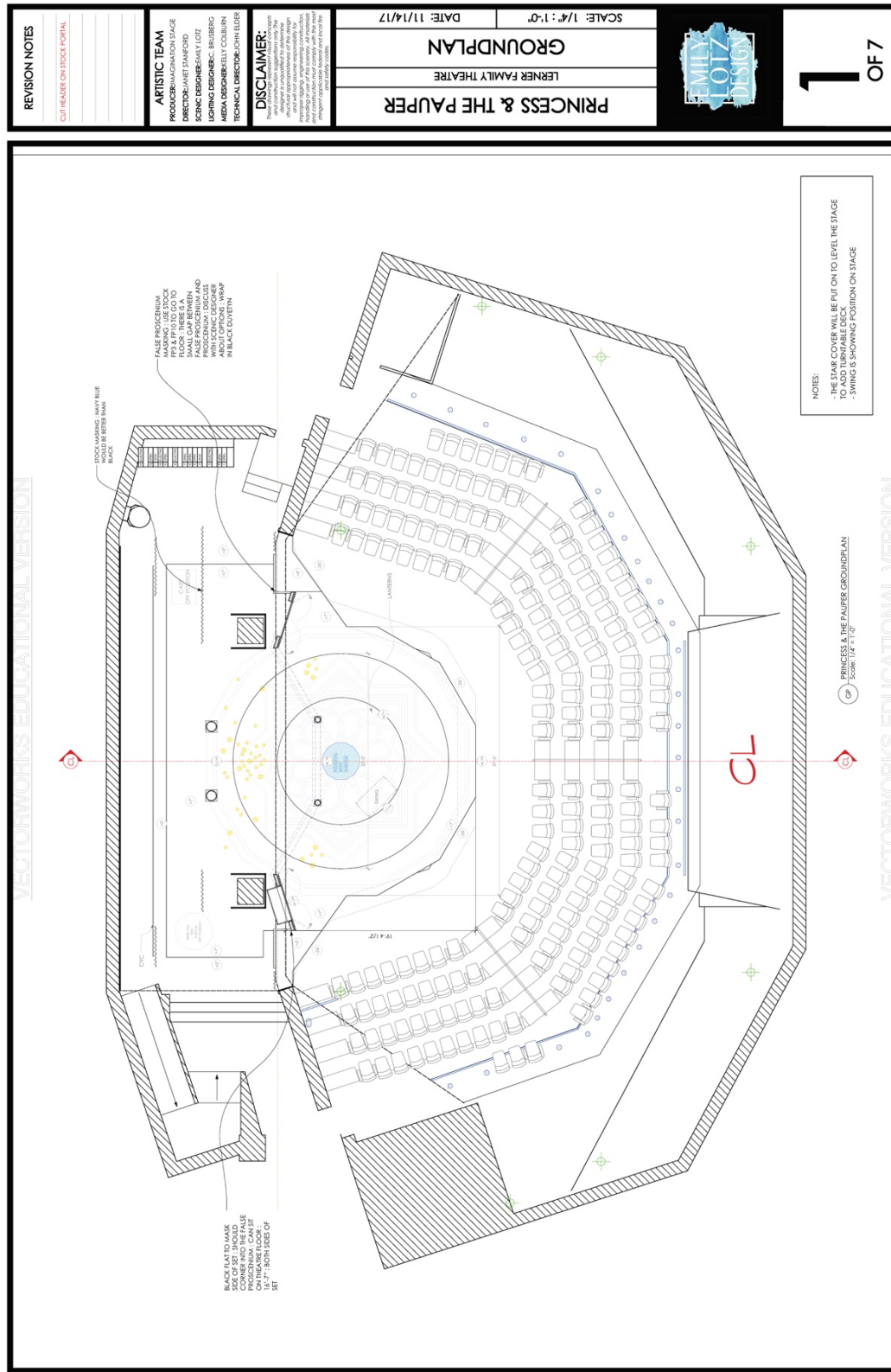


Figure 14

CHAPTER 2: THE PRODUCTION PROCESS

2.1 The Drafting

The next step in the design process was creating a full technical drafting packet for the complete set design. These drawings facilitated the technical director and production manager in the cost-out process, where we looked at the pieces of scenery and tried to get it within the \$5,000 budget and I continued to update the drafting to reflect any changes from the discussion. These draftings implemented the notes and changes of the design as seen in the bash model process, including the cutting of the second set of arches and the screen wall, and the more intricate painted design of the floor. I also made cuts on materials and fabric options to get within the given budget. The final drafting packet follows (Figures 15 to 21).



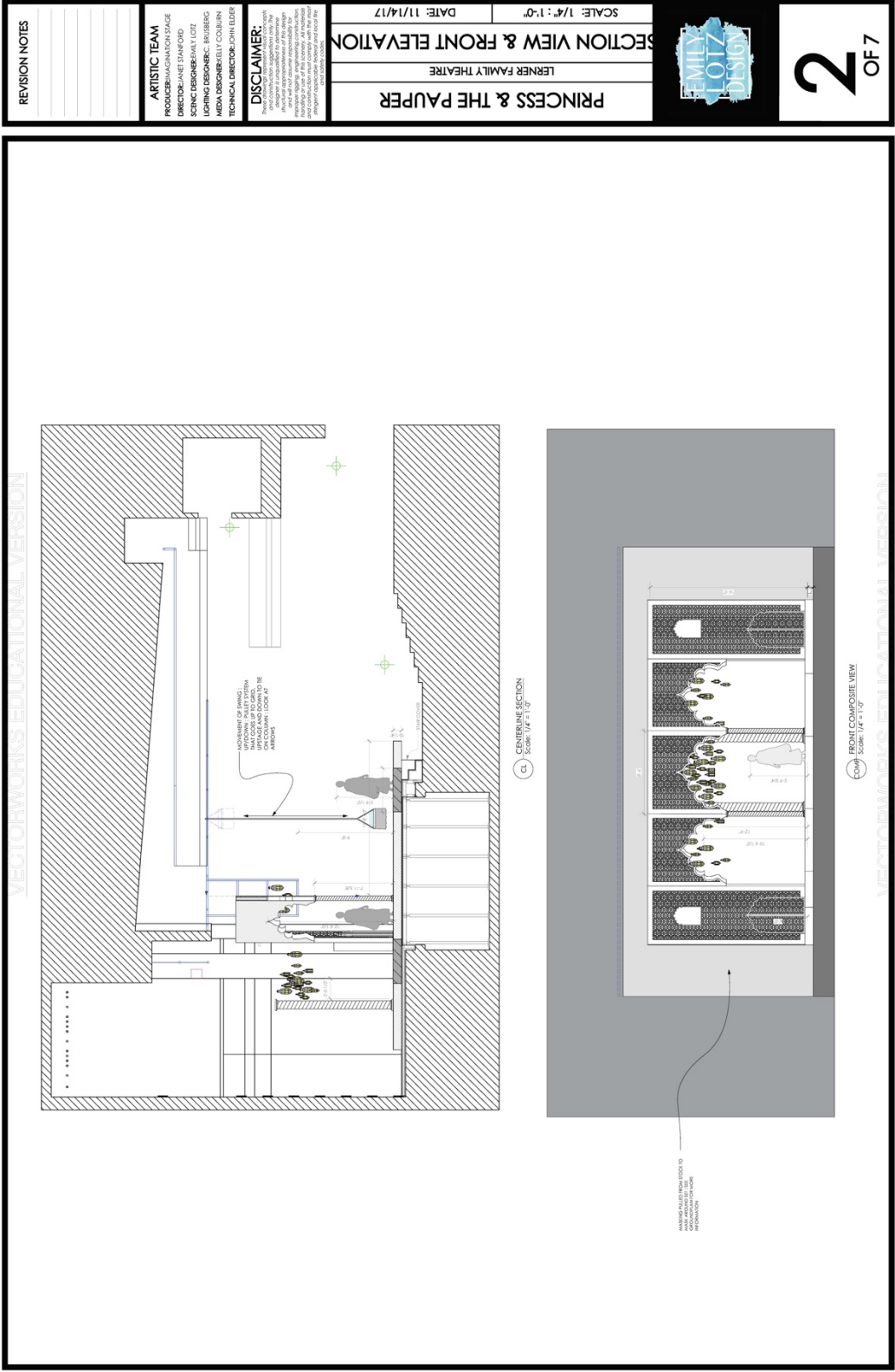
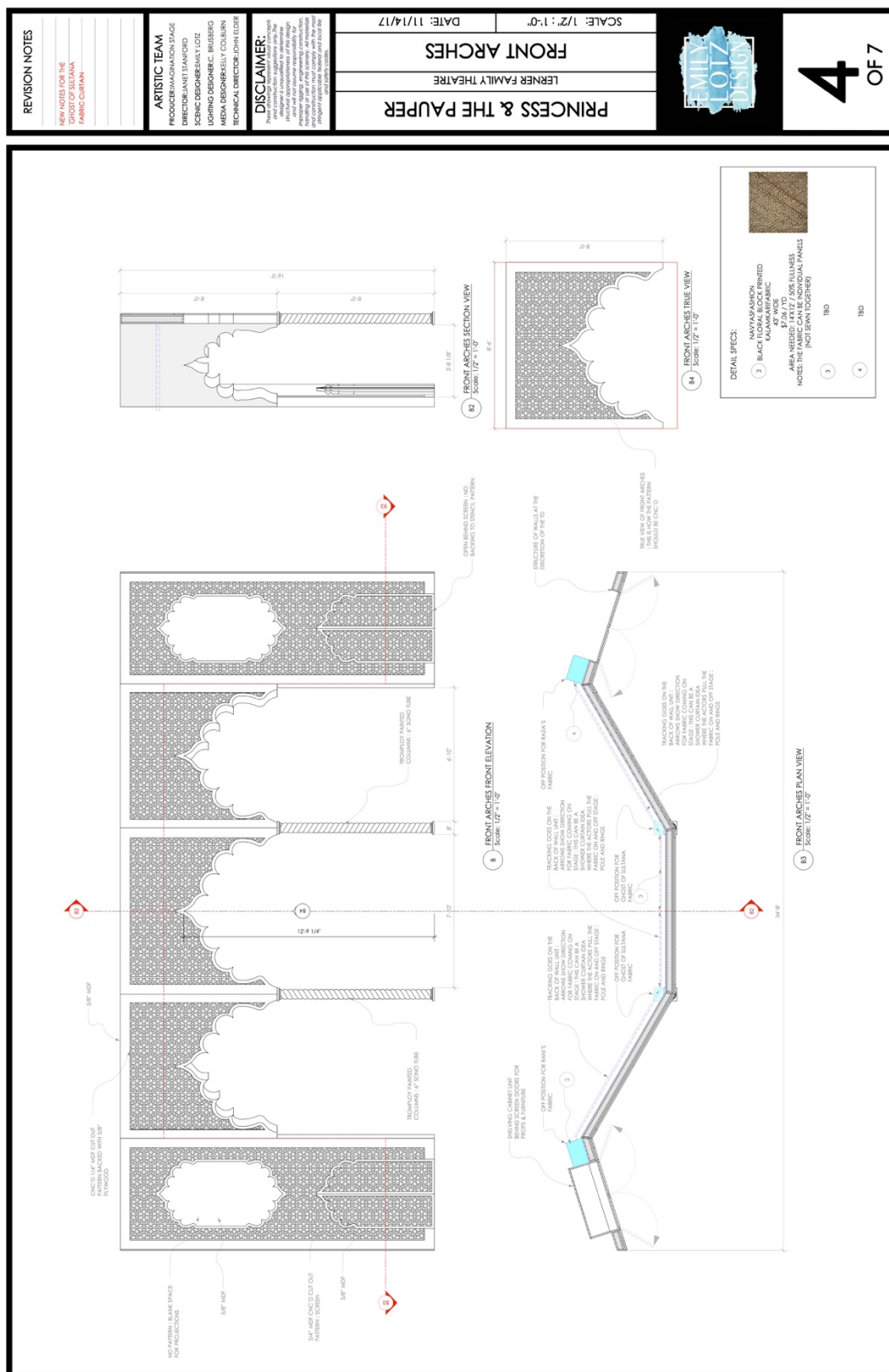


Figure 16



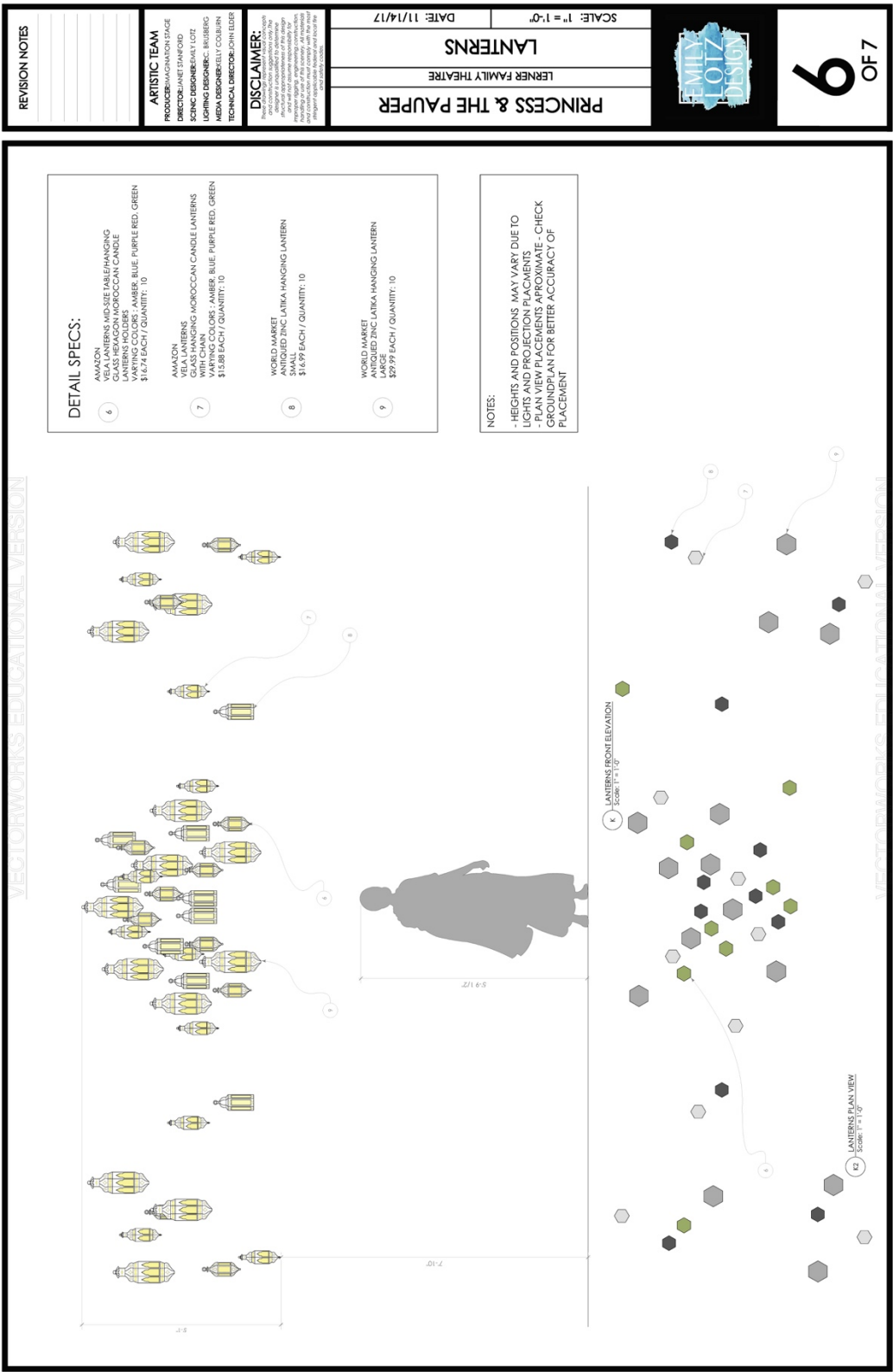


Figure 20

Figure 21

2.2 Paint Elevations

Paint Elevations communicate color, texture, detail, and scale to the scenic painter, who is responsible for executing all aspects of painted detail on the production. Since there were multiple scenic elements, it was important I specified exactly what I wanted it to look like. I had regular check-ins with the paint shop on the show's progress. Due to cuts to scenery some paint elevations became invalid, however, to show my full process, all paint elevations follow (Figures 22 to 26).

PRINCESS & THE PAUPER

SCENIC DESIGN BY EMILY LOTZ
DECK PLAN PAINT ELEVATION

NOTES:
- SEE REFERENCE IMAGES : SHOULD FEEL LIKE A
WORN DOWN, AGED TILE
- HIGH GLOSS FINISH

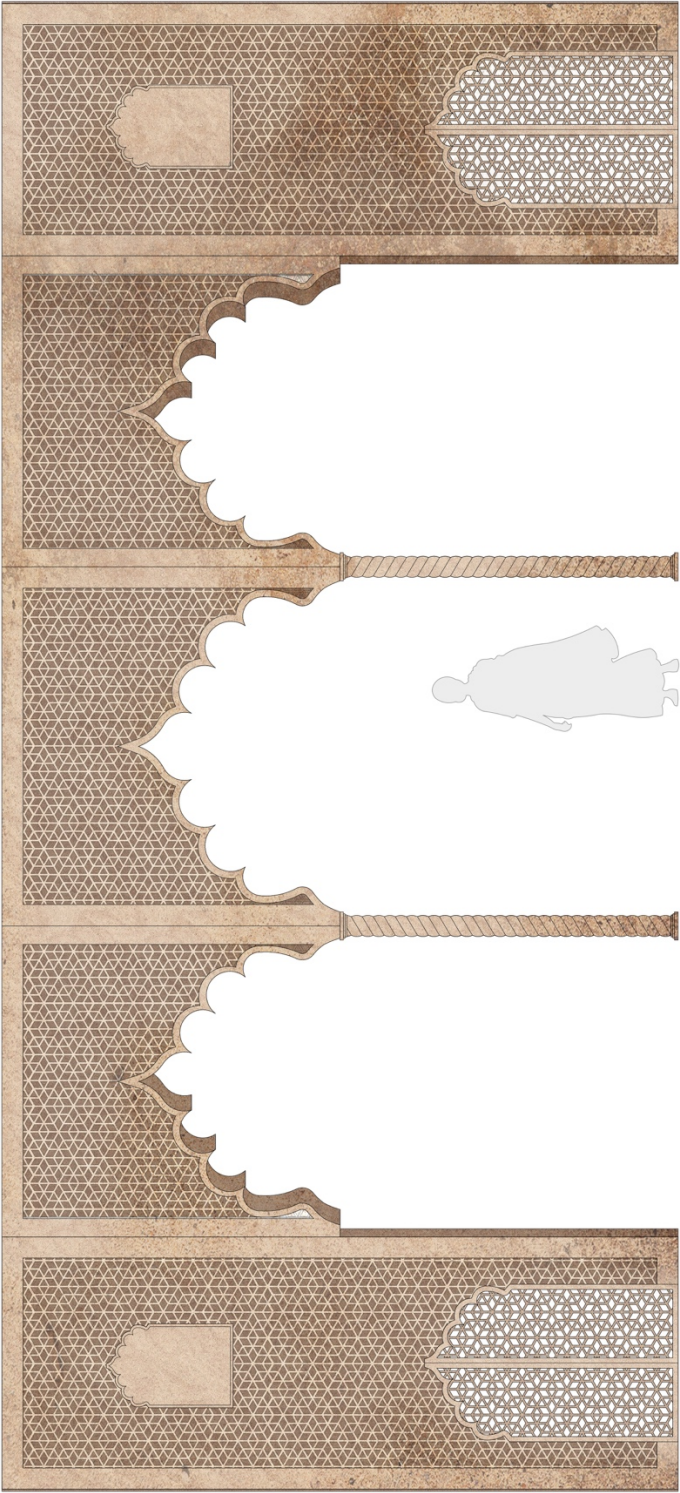
REFERENCE IMAGE:



A DECK PLAN
Scale: 1/2" = 1'-0"

A3 DECK PLAN FRONT ELEVATION
Scale: 1/2" = 1'-0"

Figure 22



NOTES:
- SEE REFERENCE IMAGES : SANDSTONE
WITH LITTLE AGING
- SATIN FINISH

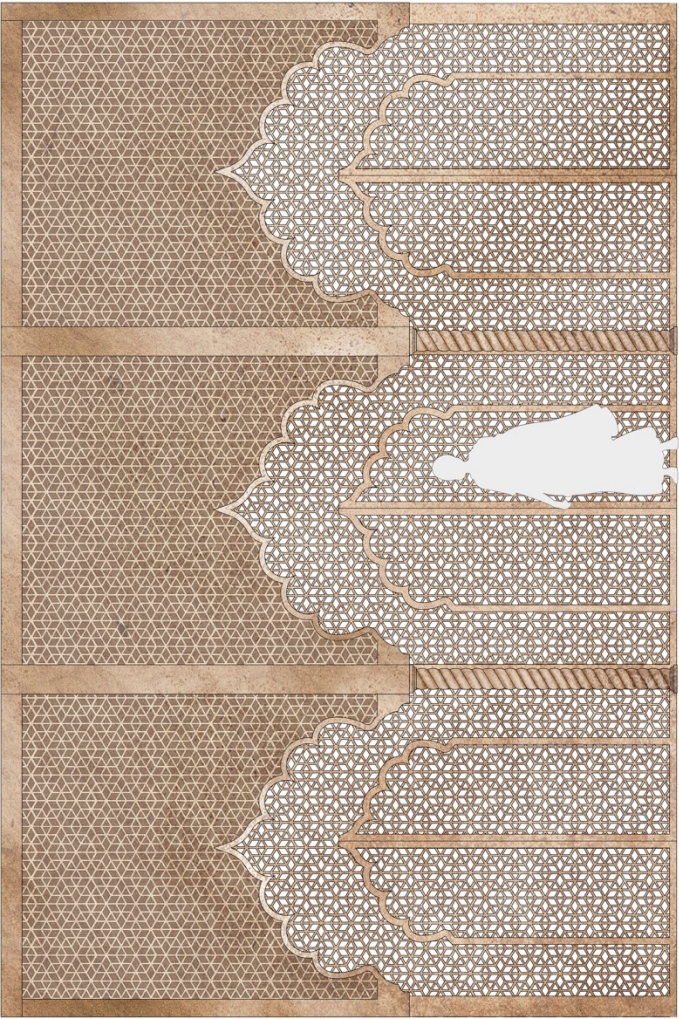
B FRONT ARCHES FRONT ELEVATION
Scale: 1/2" = 1'-0"

REFERENCE IMAGE:



PRINCESS & THE PAUPER
SCENIC DESIGN BY EMILY LOTZ
FRONT ARCHES PAINT ELEVATION

Figure 23



C MIDDLE ARCHES FRONT ELEVATION
Scale: 1/2" = 1'-0"

PRINCESS & THE PAUPER
SCENIC DESIGN BY EMILY LOTZ
MIDDLE ARCHES & COLUMN COVERS PAINT ELEVATION

- NOTES:
- SEE REFERENCE IMAGES : SANDSTONE WITH LITTLE AGING
 - SATIN FINISH

REFERENCE IMAGE:



Figure 24

PRINCESS & THE PAUPER

SCENIC DESIGN BY EMILY LOTZ
DECK PLAN PAINT ELEVATION

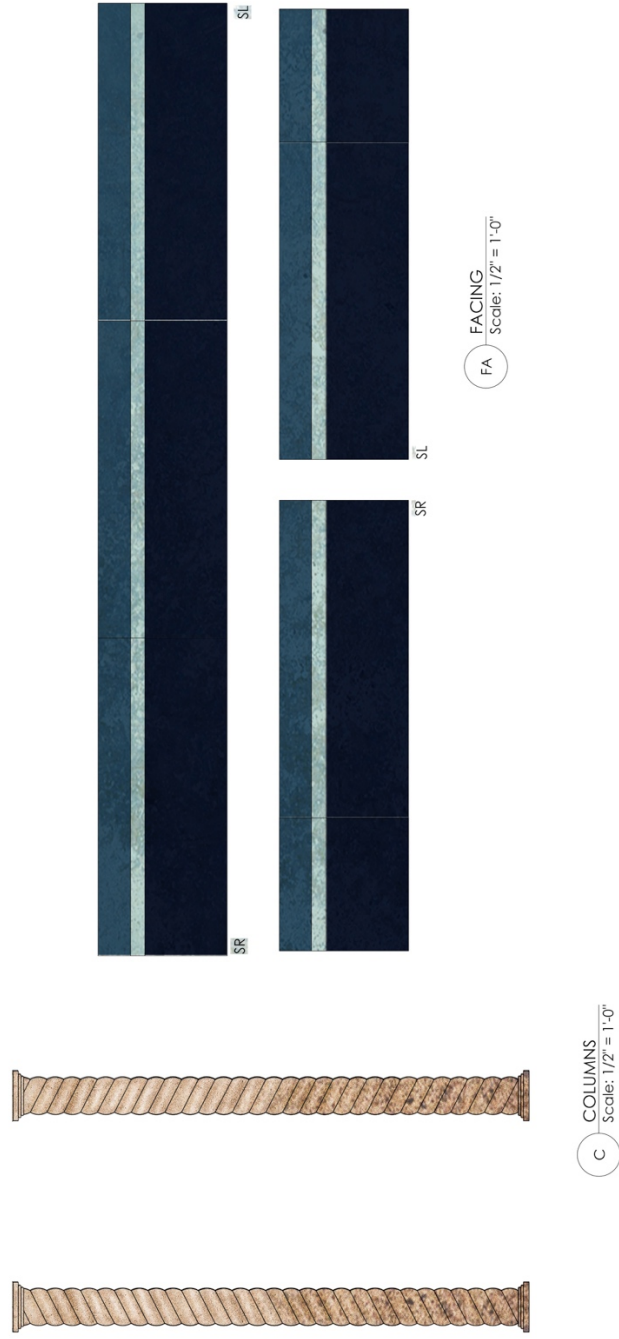
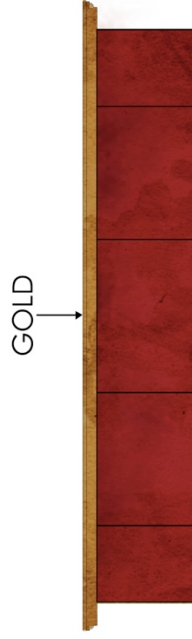


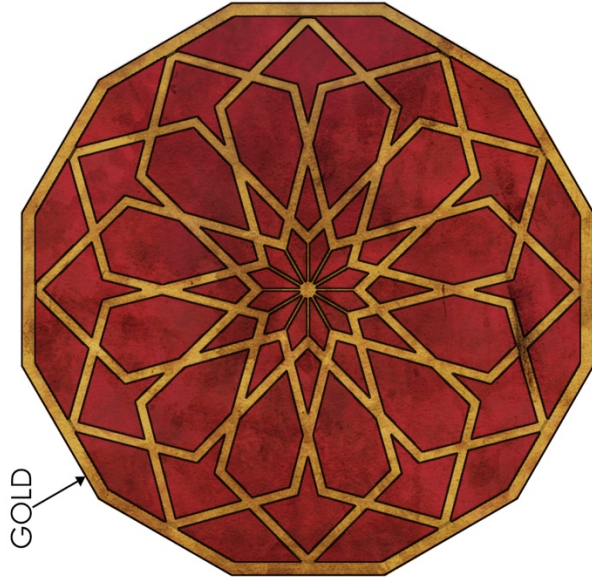
Figure 25

PRINCESS & THE PAUPER

SCENIC DESIGN BY EMILY LOTZ
SWING & PEDESTAL PAINT ELEVATION



D PEDESTAL FRONT ELEVATION
Scale: 2" = 1'-0"



D2 PEDESTAL PLAN VIEW
Scale: 2" = 1'-0"

HONDURAN ROSEWOOD



C SWING PLAN VIEW
Scale: 2" = 1'-0"

Figure 26

2.2 The Properties List

A Properties List (Figure 27) is developed to communicate to the prop master what props are needed for the production, quantity, and what they should look like. Matt McGee, the Props Designer, and I created the prop list together.

PRINCESS & THE PAUPER PROPERTIES LIST					
	prop	character	Scene	page	Notes
1	Serpent Jewel	Wazir	one	1	Big Red ruby on a necklace which Fatima rips off Rani's neck
2	Wagon	Nassim	two	1	2 wheel, wooden, rustic looking; will be loaded up with basket of wheat and fruit
3	4 shallow baskets	peasant women		1	see research, these are carried on the women's heads, filled with mangoes
4	carpet type bag	Hema		1	bag is used to carry the Wazir's choga which she is working on
5	sewing bag	Hema			similar that Hema can have needles and thread in
6	2 short stools	Hema & Rani		1	these will also be used in Hema's House, poor and rustic but sturdy enough to stand on
7	pile of mangoes	preset DS		1	these will be loaded into the baskets along with the wheat
8	stalks of wheat	preset DS		1	these will be bundled, tied off and loaded along with the mangoes
9	scythe	Nassim		1	short handled scythe for Nasim to show cutting the crops
10	string	Rani		1	to be rigged for bundling the crops and stacking in the baskets
11	5-7 baskets	Nassim		1	used for collecting the harvest and loading into the wagon
12	turban crown	Razia	three	7	costumes will provide, I think
13	sceptre	Razia		7	need research to see what this should look like
14	measuring tape	Fatima		8	for check the size of Razia's feet
15	key on belt	Fatima		9	large key for visibility, worn somehow by Fatima. Coordinate with Costumes
16	House Shrine	scenic	four	12	This is behind the doors on stage R in Hema's house, research needed
17	Floor pillows	scenic		12	These are in contrast to the rich pillows at Razia's place, 3 thread bare, well used
18	blankets	scenic		12	with the pillows these make up the sleeping arrangement for Razia and Zoya
19	kitchen unit	scenic		12	includes water jug and cups, hanging pot for cooking chai, big rice bags--empty
20	jug and water cup	Zoya		13	Zoya offers water to Nassim
21	bag of rice	Hema		13	Hema gives very small burlap bag of rice to Nassim
22	prayer rug	Nassim		14	visible in the shrine set-up, never actually used
23	Treasure chest/box	Rani		15	some special container in the shine set up where the scarves are stored
24	2 scarves	Rani & Zoya		15	"in the divine, our hearts entwine" Consult costumes
25	water cup	Zoya		15	similar to others
26	improvised crown	Rani		16	a kitchen rag which can be twisted into a makeshift turban
27	long wooden spoon	Rani		16	becomes an improvised sceptre
28	4 shallow baskets	extras		16	re-use the baskets from the opening number to suggest food platters
29	mirror frame	guards		20	large empty gilded frame which 2 guards hold for Wazir
30	2 large feather fans	guards		20	see research
31	platter with grapes	guard		21	this should be like a large restaurant serving tray filled with fruit.
32	3rd scarf	Razia		24	matches the others. Costumes?
32	two spears	guards		28	cermonial type full height spears for guarding doorways
33	3 plates rustic	Zoya & Razia		31	part of Hema's stuff
34	3 large platters	guards		39	Re-use grape platter from p. 21, add one with veggies, and one with meats
35	tea pot	Hema		43	Hema is supposed to make chai which is never served, may change to water
36	shrine wagon	Shrine scene	nine	45	redress wagon from Scene 1 to belong to Peasant woman with big pot and spoon
37	big copper pot	Peasant woman		45	Big old copper cooking pot from which woman is doling out cooked food
38	clay containers (6)	peasants		45	the peasants use these to get food from the pot
39	scroll of names	guard		45	something he can check names against and maybe get signatures
40	"Food Line Banned"	guard		46	this has the royal seal, and is posted to close down the distribution of food
41	Throne on wheels	Wazir	ten	48	this may be used in earlier scenes but definitely here, large and imposing
42	scroll	Wazir		49	Wazir has intel on Nassim and his family
43	plate with rice cake	Razia		57	
44	4 more scarves	ensemble		65	the additional scarves magically are pulled from the choga. Costumes knows.
45	Razia's Bed	Razia			needs research but should be more like a chaise longue than a full sized bed. Ornate and fancy looking but easy to lift at one end and wheel onstage quickly. 3-5 big floor pillows
46	Tabla Drum				To be played by an actor in the finale

Figure 27

2.3 Props Research

The Props Research (Figures 28 to 39) includes examples of the set dressing, furniture, and hand props. I sat down with Matt McGee, the Props Designer, and Janet Stanford, the Director, to look at the images I had pulled as reference images for the props. This gave a visual representation of the notes given on the Properties List (Figure 27).



Figure 28

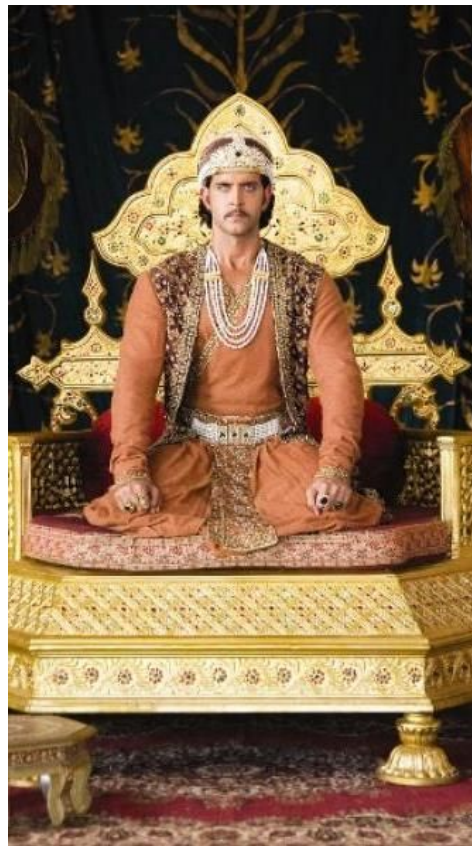


Figure 29



Figure 30



Figure 31



Figure 33



Figure 32



Figure 34



Figure 35



Figure 36



Figure 37



Figure 38



Figure 39

CHAPTER 3: THE PRODUCTION

3.1 Production Photographs

The following images (Figures 40 to 49) are from the final dress rehearsal of the production of *Princess & the Pauper – A Bollywood Tale*.



Figure 40



Figure 41



Figure 42



Figure 43



Figure 44



Figure 45



Figure 46



Figure 47



Figure 48



Figure 49



BWW Review: The Princess & the Pauper is a stage Delightful Bollywood Tale at Imagination Stage

by Hannah Wing Feb. 11, 2018

What if you could switch places with someone? In Imagination Stage's *The Princess & the Pauper - A Bollywood Tale*, Rani (Alexandra Palting), the daughter of Hema, the royal seamstress, (Sarah Corey) and sister to Zoya (Nora Achrati), wonders what it would be like to live within the walls of the palace as she and her fellow commoners including her family's friend Nassim (Jordan Moral) prepare for the coming of the Tajdari feast. Meanwhile, in the palace, Princess Razia (Anjna Swaminathan), who is isolated in her room under the watchful eye of her nanny Fatima (Emily Madden), is practicing for her role in the coronation of Wazir (Jimmy Mavrikes), who will soon become Sultan. One day, Razia, who is becoming more and more frustrated with her circumstances, escapes to be in the mango garden and she ends up bumping into Rani. In a moment of mistaken identities, chaos ensues, and the girls must figure out how to adjust. Imagination Stage's *The Princess & The Pauper - A Bollywood Tale*, written by Anu Yadav and directed by Janet Stanford, successfully captures the ambience and energy of Bollywood in a show which is excellent for both kids and adults alike.

The cast of *The Princess & the Pauper - A Bollywood Tale* really get into their characters. Not only is the cast able to settle well into their roles, but they are also able to keep up with the Bollywood style choreography and singing, which often occurs at the same time. Standouts in this cast abound. Mavrikes'

delightfully evil Wazir is roll out of your seat funny. Swaminathan's Razia and Palting's Rani are scene stealers especially when they are on stage together. Corey's Hema is wonderful as the doting mother.

The production aspects of the musical line up perfectly with ones often seen in Bollywood musical movies. The set, beautifully designed set by Emily Lotz, is a large opened columned room with detailed Indian accents and colors. The set's open space is perfect for dancing. In addition to the open space, the bottom floor of the set rotates slowly to allow for smooth scene transitions. The costumes, designed by Kristen P Ahern, fit well with the Bollywood ambiance. The music, by Aks, is so catchy that it makes anyone want to dance along with the cast. The projections, designed by Kelly Colburn, work well with the set's aesthetic especially during a scene in which Razia becomes lost in the jungle.

Imagination Stage's *The Princess & the Pauper - A Bollywood Tale* is a great show for kids with its action-packed scenes, fun dancing, and audience interaction. Parents will enjoy the production quality and the story's overall messages.

The Princess and the Pauper: A Bollywood Tale (review)

February 15, 2018 by Jill Kyle-Keith

Imagination Stage takes Mark Twain's classic 'The Prince and the Pauper' and with a sprightly script by Anu Yadav, cleverly relocates it to a bedazzling fairytale India, complete with music and dancing. With original music by Aks, quicktime choreography by Tehreema Mitha, and adeptly directed by Janet Stanford, young audiences get a two-for-one introduction to the culture of India and the immortal characters of Twain. It's a great combination.

It isn't the Bollywood of modern times- instead, it's long-ago and far-away Thirteenth Century India, when Sultans ruled with an iron fist, and to be a pauper meant to be on the very edge of starvation. Yet the peasant family of Rani (a joyful Alexandra Palting), her mother Hema (Sarah Corey, as the heart and soul of the show) and little sister Zoya (Nora Achrati) sing and dance while they work in the fields, encouraging audience members to learn the hand dances with them.

So much visually adds to the atmosphere of the show: done in collaboration with the University of Maryland MFA Theatre Design Program, Imagination Stage has once again shown its ability to evoke a time and place with just the right touches. The set by Scenic Designer Emily Lotz itself is monumental, with Indian motif fretwork and enormous columns forming an elaborate archway across the stage. This becomes a marketplace, mango garden, Rani's small hut, and even the grand palace of the Sultan. The set itself is stationary, yet a wonderful revolving circle in the center brings depth to the small stage.

If the set is good, the projections are even better due to the exemplary work of Multimedia Designer Alexandra Kelly Colburn. Before even seeing the Snake Queen, we imagine her, as projections of jungles and shadows of slithery things float across the upper reaches of fretwork. It's well done- not too scary for the little guys but you sure get the idea that the Snake Queen isn't to be taken lightly!

Costumes by Kristen P Ahern are likewise evocative: the peasantry is in kurta, simple salwar kameez, saris, and simple tunics; the Princess' everyday wear is a stunningly embroidered white costume, and the would-be Sultan, Wazir, wears a fittingly garish and bejeweled ensemble complete with feathered turban and turned-toe slippers.

Speaking of Wazir, who is trying to wrest power from the Princess Razia (the beautiful Anjna Swaminathan), actor Jimmy Mavrikes had the audience adoring him- if 'adoring' a gleefully evil fellow is indeed the right word. Strutting across the stage, bored and lounging in his throne, condemning unlucky peasants with the wave of his hand, Mavrikes is clearly enjoying himself, and he's far more laughable than outright threatening to little folks. I particularly liked an understated bit where he 'counted' the audience during his enthronement ceremony- a quick little jab of political satire that wasn't lost on the adult audience members.

The action can be a bit slow at times, and scene changes could be faster- though that could also be just opening night problems that will speed up as the run goes on.

There are more than a few lessons to learn, as both the Princess and the Pauper come to learn and a fascinating introduction to Indian culture, dance and music.



Review: 'The Princess and the Pauper – A Bollywood Tale' at Imagination Stage

By Julia L. Exline on February 12, 2018

Imagination Stage proudly debuts *The Princess and the Pauper- A Bollywood Tale*, a musical adaptation of the classic Mark Twain novel. Written exclusively for Imagination Stage by Anu Yadav and with original compositions by Aks, Janet Stanford directs this production alongside Musical Director Deborah Jacobson and Choreographer Tehreema Mitha.

Scenic Designer Emily Lotz creates a beautiful, intricate outline of a royal palace for the revolving stage (yes – I did say 'revolving' stage!). Since ample room is needed for song-and-dance numbers, most of the show's atmosphere relies on creative lighting (designed by Chris Brusberg) and projections by Kelly Colburn, ranging from a wild and dangerous jungle to a quiet, peaceful garden. The projections were my favorite technical part of the show – paired with ethereal music and cues provided by Sound Designer Matt Otto, they work together to create an overall mystical tone with thrilling effects. Vibrant and bold costumes from Designer Kristen P Ahern help seal the setting: long ago in the depths of India.

We begin with a family of put-upon farmers hastening to harvest enough fruit for the day of Tajdari, a celebration where the new sultan will be crowned by the princess. Choreographer Tehreema Mitha uses this opportunity to bring in some audience interaction, with the actors asking the audience members to help them harvest their crops through movement and song. Half starved and

weak from work, young Rani (Alex Palting) begs her mother Hema (Sarah Corey) to let her have an apple. Hema tells Rani that every last apple is reserved for the palace royals, to which she replies, "How is it fair that we cannot eat what we grow?" Rani daydreams of the luxuries of palace living with her younger sister Zoya (Nora Achraati) as the two try and distract themselves from their hunger.

Meanwhile, at the palace, princess Razia (Anjna Swaminathan) is arguing with her nanny Fatima (Emily Madden) about her strict restrictions. Having never been allowed outside of the palace gates, the young princess is restless, and sings of her frustrations of being trapped and concealed from the outside world. When both girls are driven to desperate measures, Rani finds herself trespassing into the royal mango garden, to where Razia has also escaped by stealing a palace key. The girls are startled to discover that they look nearly identical, and decide to switch clothes for the fun of seeing how the other half lives. However, the girls are caught and carried away, and in a whirl of drama and chaos, Rani ends up locked in the palace while Razia is swept into a community of commoners.

There are a lot of funny moments as both girls attempt to adjust to their new situations. Razia goes into a frenzied panic when she spots a beetle on her sleeve, while Rani is overwhelmed by the extravagance of her morning meal. However, there are also some uncomfortable truths as both girls gain truer views of the inequities of the kingdom, led by the greedy, corrupt High Minister of the Sultanate, the Wazir (a crowd-favorite performance by Jimmy Mavrikes). The conditions are deplorable, and with the Wazir scheduled to be crowned the official Sultan in a matter of days, things will only get much worse. The girls band together with their family and their friend Nassim (Jordan Moral) to try and stop the Wazir's coronation, but they encounter obstacles of both political and supernatural nature. Will the passion of many outweigh the power of one?

Imagination Stage's production of *The Princess and the Pauper-A Bollywood Tale* proved an entertaining afternoon. The story is a compelling one, and includes many nuanced social themes that can help kick-start thoughtful conversations with children. It also has lively song-and-dance numbers and humorous characters, which can be enjoyed just as they are. Truly, this show offers something for the whole family!



News: Imagination Stage Reimagines a Classic Story with ‘The Princess & The Pauper – A Bollywood Tale’

By Kaley Beins on January 20, 2018

In their new musical ‘The Princess & The Pauper – A Bollywood Tale,’ Imagination Stage tackles a re-telling of the classic Mark Twain story. Described by playwright Anu Yadav as “a feminist story about South Asian girls who learned to trust their minds,” this adaptation takes place in Dehli, India and includes songs, dance, and music that pay tribute to South Asian culture.

In ‘The Princess & The Pauper, Princess’ Razia (Anjna Swaminathan) and dressmaker’s daughter Rani (Alex Palting) decide to switch places to see what life is like in the other’s shoes. But when Wazir (Jimmy Mavrikes), a corrupt government official, tries to steal the throne from the Sultanate, Princess Razia must team up with Rani and the people of Delhi to counter injustice. Suitable for ages 5 and up, ‘The Princess & The Pauper’ addresses inequality, wealth disparity, and women’s empowerment, all through a uniquely South Asian lens. Yet, its message is applicable to all audiences. As Yadav puts it, “Our world right now is in need of stories that remind us of the power of truth, love, and connection. That’s what we will need to resolve our greatest global challenges.”

At Imagination Stage’s “A Creative Conversation with South Asian Artists” on January 18th, playwright Anu Yadav, choreographer Tehreema Mitha, actress and musician Anjna Swaminathan, and Imagination Stage Artistic Director Janet Stanford sat on a panel to discuss the creative process behind the show and the importance of representation in the arts. Moderated by

Imagination Stage MD Board Member Sunit Talapatra, the panelists discussed their own experiences and their motivations for working on this production before taking a few audience questions. Yadav spoke of growing up without seeing many South Asians in theatre productions, saying she began writing roles for herself to fill and then used her voice to provide opportunities for young South Asian girls who may not otherwise have seen a place for themselves in theatre.

In this play, she talked about embracing different cultural and religious traditions to show the commonalities between people, using the story of Razia and Rani to ask the audience, “what does it mean to see each other as humans?” Stanford said that part of her interest in directing the show, and in inviting Yadav to write it, stemmed from the idea of this “quest for identity” and relationships between people. Mitha explains that her dances also address this idea, saying, “I don’t belong to anybody, but I belong to everybody.” Swamiathan furthers this discussion by explaining that “half of writing is empathy...[it’s an effort to] constantly humanize.” The representation and exploration of South Asian culture and identity in ‘The Princess & The Pauper’ not only humanizes a culture that is often reduced to stereotypes but also works to fully develop the characters and allow them to thrive in their own identities.

CHAPTER 4: REFLECTION

In the end, I felt that my scenic design for *Princess & the Pauper – A Bollywood Tale* was mostly successful. I created an environment that could serve the various specific needs of the play while remaining true to Indian culture and Bollywood. The collaboration between the creative team led to a very cohesive and united environment where we could explore, discover, and create the design together.

The greatest challenges that I encountered on this production was communication with the director and the execution of the design by the shops. Due to the lack of feedback, criticism, and information from the director, there was a struggle in exploring the concepts and ideas of the design team, culminating in tech week, when the use of the turntable was inhibited, used minimally for transitions. This therefore lead to a less intricate and simplistic design. This was in stark contrast to what we discussed in the design process. Looking back, I would have had more conversations with the director about how each transition moved so we could more fully explore the full potential of the turntable movement. In regards to working with the shops, the scenic design was too big for their staff to handle. During the cost-out process, much of the set was cut which ended up hurting the aesthetic of the design. The loss of the back-wall screen left the space empty, with too much cyclorama and a lack of perspective in depth. Even after getting into budget, the design proved difficult to finish by tech week. Many specific items, including the curtains and lattice work on the walls, were not ready at the

beginning of tech which created problems for lighting and projections.

Concerning props, the throne, was not finished until after opening night which was disappointing. As frustrating as that situation was, it was invaluable to experience the challenges that came with working at a medium sized theatre company with a full-time production staff.

During tech week, came another challenge that we did not foresee. Once the lattice detail work was up on the walls we realized that the relief of the pattern made it hard to see the projections. As a creative team, we came together to figure out a solution. The small windows on the side walls were made larger to make a flat playing space for video to project on. This was an amazing learning experience of us all fixing a problem that ended up aiding in the final design.

If I could change anything about my final design, I would fight harder for the specificity and elegance that was in my research, but got lost throughout the negotiation process with the theatre. Despite these issues, I felt the set design landed successfully, and worked well with the direction, costumes, lights, projections, movement, and sound.

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